

# Jigsaw Stories: A Motivating Way of Reading

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*By Carmen Pilar Serrano Boyer*

Sometimes it is quite difficult to cope with large classes, especially if you want students to read a passage or book they are not interested in. What can we do to encourage our students to practise reading? It has to be a lively activity; otherwise students will soon get bored. Jigsaw stories could be the answer.

## How to Proceed

First of all we make groups of four or five people.

**1. Pre-reading activity:** The teacher writes the title of the jigsaw story on the blackboard. Then students brainstorm to think about what is going to happen in the story.

### **2. Reading activity:**

- a. The teacher gives each group a pack of cards which contains as many cards as there are phrases in the jigsaw story. These phrases have previously been written or typed on the cards.
- b. The teacher tells the groups to put the cards on their tables and look at them for a few minutes.
- c. The groups are then asked to put the cards in the right order.
- d. If a group says they have finished, the teacher will check. The group gets 10 points if their story is in the right order; if it is not, they are told to try again, but now the teacher will tell them which sentences are not in the right order. The next time the teacher checks this group's story, they will get a maximum of 8 points if the order of their story is correct, the third time a maximum of 6 points, the fourth a maximum of 4 points, etc. Who is the winner? The group that gets the most points.

**3. Post-reading activity:** The groups are asked to make up their own jigsaw stories. The best jigsaw story can be used in another class. The students who devised the story can act as assistant teachers. Students like being teachers for one day.

Note: In the reading activity the points system can vary according to teacher or student preferences. It is better if the winning group gets a little prize-maybe just stickers, pens, etc.

## A Useful Jigsaw Story to Start with

Each phrase of the following jigsaw story should be written or typed on a card. The teacher should form a pack with the cards all mixed up.

AESOP'S FABLE:

### THE FOX AND THE GRAPES

1. A very hungry fox
2. tried to get
3. a bunch of grapes
4. from a vine.
5. He jumped and jumped
6. but he was not able
7. to get the grapes.
8. When he was going away,
9. he said: "It doesn't matter.
10. They are not ripe yet."
11. Moral: Proud people
12. normally despise
13. what they
14. are not able
15. to get.

In this jigsaw story the number of words in each card ranges between 2 and 5:

- 2 words = 3 cards
- 3 words = 4 cards
- 4 words = 4 cards
- 5 words = 4 cards

The number can be changed to make the story easier or more difficult. If you want to make the story easier for your students, you should avoid the two-word cards and make longer phrases, but if you decide to make this story more difficult, you have to avoid the five-word cards and make shorter phrases.

## Conclusion

The use of jigsaw stories in the classroom is:

- a. motivating because students consider it a game,
- b. relaxing because it is a way of creating a less tense EFL class,
- c. exciting because it is a challenge to put the phrases in the right order and be the winning group,
- d. confidence building because it makes students realize they can understand and have fun with a language different from their mother tongue,

- e. easy to do for the teacher because you need only a story, cards, and a typewriter or pen.

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